

## SHE'S NINETEEN YEARS OLD

Bob took off from work early and dropped by Amber's place, found her with scabbed over stitches in her lips, and parentally-provided temporary caps cemented onto the nubs and stumps where her original incisors had been, interrupting her as she plunked her way through Muddy Waters' 'She's Nineteen Years Old.' She gazed at Bob, as he stood in gape-mouthed indignation in the brilliant sunshine in the doorway, through eyes still swollen from the impacts of Roger Karpek's fists, then she laid her guitar on the slumping bed and got up and went to him and gave him a hard hug that made his heart jump.

He drove to the Seven-Eleven up Sixth Street and bought some burritos and some beer and brought them back to Amber's place, and he and the girl sat on the old hotel's littered and fissured community patio at a rusted round metal table under the flaking umbrella and ate and drank, and Amber told Bob about Roger's jealous attack and subsequent incarceration, about her inability — without Roger's financial input into her household — to meet the rent. Bob sympathized with her, held her hand, gave it meaningful squeezes now and then.

They eventually, after several beers apiece, found their way back into the dim apartment, where they involved themselves in a sexual act that was sweet and gentle, and short of full-on intercourse.

Bob kissed her in the doorway on his way out, brushing his lips gently around the black crusts of the sutures. Then he hugged once more and departed.

Amber used a chubby knuckle to wipe a tear from her eye and went back to her music, and found two twenties rolled together into a hard cylinder and stuck under the strings up high on the neck of her guitar.

## DEEP IN HIS HEART

Bob Urp drove home after an encounter with a young blues singer that featured sexual activity that stopped short of ejaculation, sought out his wife Glenda to relieve his pent up juices, sneaked up behind her in the middle of her vacuum frenzy and slipped his hands up under her sweatshirt and grabbed a couple of unfettered breasts. Glenda jumped and screamed over the Hoover's roar, then she called Bob a bastard, and then she gave in to his advances — the kids were in school, and Mom's friend Wanda had driven the old girl down to the Beauty Nook for the administration of a fresh hair-do, and Glenda was (there was just something sexual



about pushing around a growling, throbbing upright) horny too.

They stripped down right there in the living room, and to add a little spice — the danger of being caught in the act — they coupled up on the sofa, were clawing and writhing in each others clutches when the danger factor proved true: Mom, home early because her usual girl Sabrina had gone home sick, standing rigid in front of the china cabinet, her old craggy face distorted into a grimace of horror. "OH JESUS FUCKING CHRIST!" Glenda screamed, as she kicked a still unejaculated Bob up off her, over the arm of the sofa and into a flying collision with the wall. The picture of the kids — the boy in a stiff shirt and bow-tie, the girl in frills, a pink ribbon in her hair — jumped away from its stud-sunk nail and bounced on the rug, and Mom wailed (a phlegmy, guttural noise coming from deep in the belly) into the kitchen and pulled the cutlery drawer out of the cabinet and spilled its contents on the floor. Then from the mish-mash of utensils on the linoleum, she made her choice.

Bob was attempting — in a blind panic; Mom had a history of psychotic episodes (and dirty, filthy sex was one of their triggers) that featured murderous intentions — to jump into his trousers two legs at a time when his mother-in-law emerged from the kitchen brandishing, in his direction, a long-pronged meat fork. Bob tugged the pants up and discovered he'd situated them backwards. His scared flaccid penis flopped atop his belt loop as he hopped backwards and into the wall, and Mom — her head gyroscoping atop her thin neck, her eyes bulging with her schizophrenic perspective — screamed loud and shrill, lunged forward and planted the prongs of her fork deep in her son-in-law's heart.

#### WITH EVERY BEAT OF HIS HEART

Ellis Leahy, tuba in tow, was the first member of the Loma Alta Brass Band to show up for practice at Bob Urp's place, and it was apparent right away that the blowing session would not be. A shriek through the screen door announced: "OH MY GOD, SHE'S KILLED HIM!" Ellis dropped his tuba and blasted into the house and found Saxophone Bob Urp laid out on the living room floor, a meat fork buried in the center of his chest, the black wooden handle pointing at heaven, hopping, quivering in a gelatinous dance with every beat of Bob's heart.

Glenda Urp screamed wordlessly at the hideous scene, huddled back into the corner of the room, then she lunged at the fork with the intention of extracting it from her husband's chest. Ellis body-blocked her, pushed her back into the wall and said, "Leave it be; you pull it outa there, he'll